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Sent: 3/28/2019 1:08:13 PM
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Subject: EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines - Thursday, March 28, 2019

EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines

Thursday, March 28, 2019

*** DAILY HOT LIST ***

Wheeler To Face Appropriators in First Hill Test as EPA Head

BLOOMBERG ENVIRONMENT EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler will face House appropriators April 2 to defend the Trump administration's fiscal 2020 budget request, which again seeks deep cuts to the agency's budget and staffing levels. Wheeler will appear before the House Appropriations subcommittee for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, the committee confirmed March 27. The hearing will be Wheeler's first Hill test since he was formally confirmed to the Environmental Protection Agency's top slot in February. Wheeler last testified before Congress in January, when he was acting agency head, during his confirmation hearing for the job. The Trump White House is proposing to slash the EPA's budget by around \$2 billion—including eliminating many voluntary climate programs and requesting large reductions in the EPA's grant programs that help state and local regulators implement federal environmental protections. The request is consistent with previous Trump administration proposals. Wheeler is likely to face scrutiny over those proposed cuts from appropriators on both sides of the aisle. Congress hasn't matched the Trump administration's requested steep cut to the EPA in prior years, even when both chambers were controlled by Republicans. It isn't clear whether Wheeler will publicly back all of the Trump administration's proposed cuts, but he recently defended the 2020 budget request's proposal to cut nearly 2,000 EPA jobs...

Proposal to drill for shale gas at U.S. Steel site near Pittsburgh prompts contentious hearing

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA At hearing Wednesday night on a proposal to drill for natural gas at a U.S. Steel facility in the eastern Pittsburgh suburbs, dozens of residents and environmentalists lined up to speak out against the plan, as well as grill state officials and company representatives with questions. New Mexico-based Merrion Oil and Gas wants to drill at the Edgar Thomson plant next year to supply natural gas to the steelmaking facility. It has already secured some approvals from municipalities in the path of drilling, and now it's seeking several permits from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. In addition to building a wellpad and drilling in the Marcellus Shale, the company also plans to build access roads and two pipelines, including one for gas and one for water. Wednesday's hearing in Braddock began with Merrion representatives explaining plans for the project and DEP officials outlining permit requirements. But it soon evolved into a contentious string of questions and criticism from attendees. Megan McDonough, municipal ordinance project organizer with Food & Water Watch, wondered why municipalities like East Pittsburgh and North Versailles did not host public hearings before they granted approvals for the project. "Everyone in this room is here because it is painfully obvious that those of us that are residents of the Mon Valley have become the sacrifice zone for the rest of Allegheny County," she said. McDonough lives in Elizabeth along the Monongahela River near other U.S. Steel facilities. The steelmaker is under scrutiny amid problems at one of those

plants, Clairton Coke Works, after a December fire destroyed pollution controls. Rachel Priselac of Forest Hills lives within 2 miles of the proposed wells. She has a 3-year-old daughter who experiences breathing problems aggravated by pollution, and she's worried about emissions from additional truck traffic in the area...

Wolf's \$8M to remove PFAS from Bucks water won't solve the problem, activists say

WHYY - PHILADELPHIA Pennsylvania will contribute \$8 million toward helping remove a number of unregulated toxic chemicals from contaminated water in the Bucks County communities of Warminster, Ivyland, Warwick, and Warrington. Gov. Tom Wolf announced Tuesday that \$5 million will go to Warminster and \$3 million is slated for Warrington. Seventeen public wells — 13 operated by the Warminster Municipal Authority and four in Warrington serving a total of about 55,000 consumers — were contaminated with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, known as PFAS, used in firefighting foam at military bases in the area. The chemicals have been linked to some forms of cancer and other illnesses including elevated cholesterol, low birth weights, and thyroid problems. The funds from the Commonwealth Financial Authority's H2O PA program will enable the municipalities to use their own wells, instead of buying water from other sources at a higher cost. "Access to safe drinking water is one of the fundamental rights of every Pennsylvanian," Wolf said. But activists and residents contend the move won't solve the problem. More than two-dozen communities in Bucks and Montgomery counties have some level of PFAS in their water supply right now, said Tracy Carluccio of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network. So while assisting some municipalities will help, the problem is extensive. "And while it's great that the state is stepping up at this moment of need for these communities with this money, in the end, it needs to be covered fully by the responsible party. And in this case, for these communities, it's the military," Carluccio said...

Self-described climate contrarian tells Pa. House committee global warming alarm is overblown

PENNSYLVANIA CAPITAL-STAR Gregory Wrightstone's testimony on what he called climate myths Wednesday ended up drawing a chuckle from a vampire, fairy, and other mythical creatures who gathered to protest a self-described climate contrarian's take on the global warming. Wrightstone, a geologist and self-published author with ties to the natural gas industry, was invited to speak to the House Environmental Resources & Energy Committee by its chair Rep. Daryl Metcalfe, R-Butler. In an hour of testimony and questions, Wrightstone claimed that while human activity is heating the Earth, the potential consequences are not dire as the vast majority of governmental and scientific studies have concluded. Wrightstone cited increased plant growth and the benefits of a warm climate as opposed to past ice ages while making his case for carbon. "CO2 has increased. I will argue that's a good thing," Wrightstone said after the hearing. "Carbon dioxide increases have been benefitting Earth and humanity." Besides increasing global temperatures, built up atmospheric carbon also leads to ocean acidification, which can disrupt ocean ecosystems and threaten people who rely on the sea for food. Currently, the Earth's atmosphere is above 400 parts per million carbon. The previous high in recent geological history was 300 parts per million roughly 350,000 years ago, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association. While increased carbon is good for plant growth, a recent study found rice grown in a high carbon environment is less nutritious. Micheal Mann, a Penn State professor of atmospheric science, said in an email that Wrightstone's acceptance of warming but attempt to portray it as a good thing is an example of a "kindler, gentler form of denial" of climate science. "The science of climate change impacts ... shows that climate change is having very detrimental impacts on us now, many of which are playing out in real time, and these impacts will become far worse," he wrote...

Experts say Chesapeake Bay water quality is the best since monitoring began

NEWPORT NEWS DAILY PRESS Well over half of the Chesapeake Bay still is polluted, but experts say water quality has improved significantly — and, in fact, is now the best they've ever measured. New preliminary data from the Chesapeake Bay Program indicates that about 42 percent of the bay and its tidal tributaries met clean water standards from 2015 to 2017, while 58 percent failed to do so. Water quality in that period ranks as the highest achieved

since monitoring began in 1985. “Improvements in water quality take time, but we are finally seeing a positive response to the many restoration efforts of our partners,” said Dinorah Dalmasy, co-chairwoman of the CBP Water Quality Goal Implementation Team. The new assessment is a 5 percent increase over the 40 percent attainment reached in 2014-2016. Experts credit the improvement to less algae growth and boosts in underwater grasses and in dissolved oxygen in the open waters of the bay. Algal blooms are fueled by too much nitrogen and phosphorus dumped into the watershed. When those blooms die, the decay process sucks up dissolved oxygen and creates “dead zones” lethal to marine life. Underwater grasses are crucial habitat for many bay species, but are threatened in part by pollutants and sediment eroding into the bay and its tributaries. Sediment can smother grass beds and cloud the water column, blocking sunlight from reaching underwater plants. A “pollution diet” that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency imposed on Virginia and other bay states in 2010 has helped curb nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment loads to the estuary. Those loads can vary widely from year to year depending on the amount of seasonal rainfall, extreme weather events and changes in land use throughout the 64,000-square-mile watershed. Experts say that from October 2016 to September 2017 about 240 million pounds of nitrogen, 12.7 million pounds of phosphorus and 4.3 billion pounds of sediment reached the bay...

VIMS inventories every foot of the Chesapeake Bay coastline

NEWPORT NEWS DAILY PRESS Maybe you want to find shoreline access in Hampton — boathouses, docks, public ramps. Maybe you’re curious about development along Lynnhaven Inlet in Virginia Beach or a sea level rise scenario in Isle of Wight. Or maybe you’re interested in tree fringes, beaches, bank height, tidal marshes, oyster reefs, mud flats or underwater grasses along more rural stretches of the Chesapeake Bay. Whatever floats your boat or piques your interest about the makeup of the Chesapeake coastline, the newest iteration of the official “coastal inventory” produced by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science can oblige you. The inventory features a host of interactive maps that drill down to every single foot of the bay’s 62.7 million feet of shoreline in Virginia and Maryland. The goal, said Marcia Berman, program director of VIMS’ Comprehensive Coastal Inventory, is to provide community representatives and resource managers as much accurate information as possible to make smart management decisions. “The coastline is changing all the time,” said Berman. “The land use changes. Sea level, of course, is rising. This information is becoming more and more important for assessing resiliency for communities.” The inventory began in a smaller way 47 years ago as a directive from the General Assembly for VIMS to map all tidal wetlands in the state. “What kind of plant communities there were, and where they were,” said Carl Hershner, director of VIMS’ Center for Coastal Resources Management. Then, in 1989, Berman said, researchers pivoted and expanded to a more comprehensive approach to map shoreline position and conditions. That shift was partly in response to a controversy over whether to allow bulkheads at an oceanfront development in Sandbridge in Virginia Beach. “The General Assembly asked us what the policy should be,” said Hershner. “And our recommendation back to them was, ‘Well, if you’re going to set a policy for managing the shoreline, we had better know what the condition of all the shoreline was.’ ” ...

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

New Jersey AG: 'We're taking on DuPont' over contamination, PFAS Two days after New Jersey environmental officials ordered five companies to pay what will likely be hundreds of millions to address chemical contamination caused by the discharge of PFAS compounds, the state’s attorney general sued some of the companies over cleanup. In two lawsuits filed in Superior Court, the state alleged DuPont and Chemours sent the harmful chemicals flowing into the air, water, and soil, and asked the court to force the companies to pay for investigating and restoring the contaminated sites. The same companies also discharged other dangerous substances, including lead and mercury, at two sites in Gloucester and Passaic Counties, two additional lawsuits filed Wednesday say. “They decided to put profit above the safety of New Jersey’s residents, and we won’t stand for it,” Attorney General Gurbir Grewal said at a news conference. “We’re holding polluters accountable for decades of misconduct.” The various chemicals in question cause cancers and other health issues. Contamination at the sites has affected local residents — and the state alleges DuPont and its spin-off company, Chemours, knew the dangers and did not act. After talks with the state over decades, the companies’ cleanup has been inadequate, officials said. New Jersey hopes to force payment from the companies for restoring all four sites as well as for damage to natural resources. Chemours said in a statement Wednesday that the lawsuits “appear to be

coming out of left field” and that the company was disappointed. “Chemours has consistently stepped up to its responsibility and worked cooperatively with state and federal officials regarding any environmental issues at our manufacturing and remediation sites in New Jersey,” a spokesperson said in an e-mailed statement. “[W]e are particularly surprised by this action since DuPont and NJDEP agreed in June 2005 to resolve groundwater natural resource matters in New Jersey.”...

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

Contentious crowd rejects shale well proposal at Edgar Thomson mill site

Almost all of the two dozen written comments submitted to the state Department of Environmental Protection so far are in opposition to Merrion Oil & Gas Co.’s proposal to drill a shale gas well next to U.S. Steel Corp’s Edgar Thomson steel mill in the Mon Valley. At Wednesday evening’s DEP public meeting in a cavernous Braddock fire hall, regulators heard more of the same. Except louder. And angrier. More than 30 of the 200 people in attendance lined up at a microphone to ask questions and tell DEP officials and representatives of U.S. Steel and Merrion Oil & Gas Corp., which has a lease to drill but no state permits yet, that they don’t want the well and the public health and safety risks they say it will bring. “You’re not drilling under an industrial site,” said Jeamour Matthew, a resident of North Braddock. “You’re proposing to drill under my community, my house and my businesses and roads.” “The steel industry has a history of dumping in our rivers and this is going to do the same damn thing,” said John Paylor, a Braddock resident. “I’m opposed to this because it’s not going to do anything for the people who live here.” Other drilling opponents said they were concerned about the public health and safety impacts of siting a shale gas well in a densely populated area where industrial emissions from coke and steel making mills already make the Mon Valley’s airshed one of the most polluted in the nation. Approximately 21,000 people live within a 2-mile radius of the proposed well site, located between Braddock Avenue and Turtle Creek on U.S. Steel-owned property that straddles the North Versailles-East Pittsburgh border and is within the eastern property line of the 145-year-old steel mill. New Mexico-based Merrion has never drilled an “unconventional” horizontal shale gas well anywhere, or any other type of oil or gas well in Pennsylvania. The company, founded in 1950, does have extensive experience drilling “conventional” vertical wells in New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana, and according to Ryan Davis, Merrion’s operation manager, many of those in “urban” neighborhoods of Farmington, N.M...

Hazelwood Green Brownfield Redevelopment Site To Receive \$10M In State Funding The state has awarded \$10 million to help spur development at Hazelwood Green, but state Rep. Jake Wheatley, whose district includes the former industrial site, said he is both "supportive" and "concerned ." The funding includes a \$4 million grant and a \$6 million low-interest (3 percent over 20 years) loan, according to a press release, and will allow the RIDC Southwestern Pennsylvania Growth Fund to build a three-story building on the site. The building would be part of a project to redevelop a 12.6-acre portion Hazelwood Green, site of a former LTV Steel mill. The entire 178-acre site, owned by Almono LP, which is a partnership of three foundations, sits along the Monongahela River. The building would include a garage, lab and workshop space. According to Mr. Wheatley's office, RIDC is in negotiations with a technology company that performs research and development in the vehicle industry. “This is a major investment by the state in a project which could serve to become the nucleus for other developments in and around this former industrial site,” Mr. Wheatley said. “While I have been, and remain, supportive of this project, I am also concerned. I am concerned that more isn’t being done to ensure that the residents of Hazelwood and the surrounding communities benefit from the jobs that this project will create.” The funding — the grant and loan — is being provided by the state Department of Community and Economic Development’s Business in Our Sites program. Almono LP is a partnership of three foundations — The Heinz Endowments, the Richard King Mellon Foundation and the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation.

Letter: Clean water is important to everyone

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE REVIEW

Aspinwall Riverfront Park Earns Western PA Environmental Award Aspinwall Riverfront Park will receive a \$5,000 prize for its work to restore the area’s lackluster waterfront. The park is a winner of the 2019 Western Pennsylvania

Environmental Awards, presented by Dominion Energy and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council. It is among five groups chosen for a commitment to environmental stewardship. Winners will be honored at an awards ceremony on May 22 at The Westin Pittsburgh, downtown. Other recipients include Lucas DeGroote, the rector for Powdermill Nature Reserve in Westmoreland County and Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps in Harrisburg. Park officials could not immediately be reached for comment. Since its inception in 2011, the 10-acre park sandwiched between Freeport Road and the Allegheny River has transformed into a destination for outdoor enthusiasts. A former marina was repurposed as the park's Welcome Center, a dock with public fishing access was built in 2018 and an amphitheater is a hub for community theater. Venture Outdoors operates a kayak rental and there are walking trails through abundant native flower gardens for people to peruse. A small off-leash dog park was opened late last year, and the park partners with the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania to offer free public classes on native birds...

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA (NPR)

Proposal to drill for shale gas at U.S. Steel site near Pittsburgh prompts contentious hearing At hearing Wednesday night on a proposal to drill for natural gas at a U.S. Steel facility in the eastern Pittsburgh suburbs, dozens of residents and environmentalists lined up to speak out against the plan, as well as grill state officials and company representatives with questions. New Mexico-based Merrion Oil and Gas wants to drill at the Edgar Thomson plant next year to supply natural gas to the steelmaking facility. It has already secured some approvals from municipalities in the path of drilling, and now it's seeking several permits from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. In addition to building a wellpad and drilling in the Marcellus Shale, the company also plans to build access roads and two pipelines, including one for gas and one for water. Wednesday's hearing in Braddock began with Merrion representatives explaining plans for the project and DEP officials outlining permit requirements. But it soon evolved into a contentious string of questions and criticism from attendees. Megan McDonough, municipal ordinance project organizer with Food & Water Watch, wondered why municipalities like East Pittsburgh and North Versailles did not host public hearings before they granted approvals for the project. "Everyone in this room is here because it is painfully obvious that those of us that are residents of the Mon Valley have become the sacrifice zone for the rest of Allegheny County," she said. McDonough lives in Elizabeth along the Monongahela River near other U.S. Steel facilities. The steelmaker is under scrutiny amid problems at one of those plants, Clairton Coke Works, after a December fire destroyed pollution controls. Rachel Priselac of Forest Hills lives within 2 miles of the proposed wells. She has a 3-year-old daughter who experiences breathing problems aggravated by pollution, and she's worried about emissions from additional truck traffic in the area...

House panel hosts climate change doubter, whose beliefs draw a rebuke from scientists An early-morning state House committee meeting Wednesday drew an unusual number of protesters to the state Capitol — many of them unusually dressed. The reason for their discontent was the meeting's featured testifier, a geologist who rejects mainstream climate science, and who has spent most of his career working and consulting for natural gas companies. The demonstrators were from the Better Path Coalition and other groups, and came dressed as mythical creatures like unicorns and leprechauns in an effort, they said, to show that while the creatures are imaginary, climate change is real. The geologist, Gregory Wrightstone, was tapped to testify by Daryl Metcalfe, one of the most conservative members of the House and chair of the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, who said he invited Wrightstone to debunk "myths." Wrightstone doesn't deny the earth is warming, or that CO2 has increased rapidly since industrialization. But he told assembled lawmakers that based on his study of geologic records, he believes warming started significantly before industrialization, in the 17th century. He said the warming since then is natural, and he argued that it's actually a positive thing. He referenced the Little Ice Age — a period of unusual cold that scientists believe peaked sometime in the mid-1600s "This cold period was marked by crop failure, famine, and mass-depopulation because of naturally-occurring global cooling," he said. "Earth and humanity have benefited greatly from what's been called the long, slow thaw." ...

Watch 'Three Mile Island: The New Nuclear Dilemma' Forty years ago today, the United States experienced the most serious nuclear accident in its history. The partial meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant near Harrisburg in 1979 sparked a major anti-nuclear backlash — halting the industry's growth in the U.S. for decades. Now, amid climate concerns, there's a big push to keep nuclear plants open. Nuclear plants provide about 20 percent of the nation's electricity, but many in the U.S. are old and unprofitable, including Three Mile Island. The plant is scheduled to close this fall — 15 years before its operating license expires. StateImpact Pennsylvania's latest documentary, *Three Mile Island: The New Nuclear Dilemma* explores the plant's fraught history and the new fight to keep it open:

The show airs on PBS member stations across Pennsylvania and will be preceded by a 30-minute program called *Meltdown at Three Mile Island: 40 Years Later*, which focuses on what happened during the 1979 accident...

WHYY PHILADELPHIA

Wolf's \$8M to remove PFAS from Bucks water won't solve the problem, activists say Pennsylvania will contribute \$8 million toward helping remove a number of unregulated toxic chemicals from contaminated water in the Bucks County communities of Warminster, Ivyland, Warwick, and Warrington. Gov. Tom Wolf announced Tuesday that \$5 million will go to Warminster and \$3 million is slated for Warrington. Seventeen public wells — 13 operated by the Warminster Municipal Authority and four in Warrington serving a total of about 55,000 consumers — were contaminated with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, known as PFAS, used in firefighting foam at military bases in the area. The chemicals have been linked to some forms of cancer and other illnesses including elevated cholesterol, low birth weights, and thyroid problems. The funds from the Commonwealth Financial Authority's H2O PA program will enable the municipalities to use their own wells, instead of buying water from other sources at a higher cost. "Access to safe drinking water is one of the fundamental rights of every Pennsylvanian," Wolf said. But activists and residents contend the move won't solve the problem. More than two-dozen communities in Bucks and Montgomery counties have some level of PFAS in their water supply right now, said Tracy Carluccio of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network. So while assisting some municipalities will help, the problem is extensive. "And while it's great that the state is stepping up at this moment of need for these communities with this money, in the end, it needs to be covered fully by the responsible party. And in this case, for these communities, it's the military," Carluccio said...

BUCKS COUNTY COURIER TIMES

Unwell Water: New Bucks Courier Times Webpage On PFAS Contamination Toxic firefighting chemicals continue to contaminate aquifers and waterways locally and across the country. Pennsylvania and New Jersey are contemplating action, but environmental regulations in other states are being met with push back from the Department of Defense...

ERIE TIMES NEWS

Lead Levels Still Elevated in Water At Erie School New test results confirm earlier findings at Emerson-Gridley, where Erie School District continues to ship in drinking water for students. Repairs set for summer. The Erie School District is still dealing with water woes at its Emerson-Gridley building. The second round of tests at the alternative-education school confirmed elevated lead levels in the water, district officials said. The first set of tests detected the elevated levels, according to results the Erie School District received on Feb 20. The district and Erie Water Works conducted more tests, and both showed lead in amounts above what the Environmental Protection Agency classifies as an "action" level. Emerson-Gridley, on Gridley Park between Liberty and Plum streets, has remained open. But the latest tests mean the school district will keep the water fountains shut off and will continue to ship in bottled drinking water for the school's approximately 300 students. The district will also continue to work with Erie Water Works to determine the source of contamination and to figure out how to fix the problem, such as by replacing pipes, Erie School District officials said. Superintendent Brian Polito said the work will occur over the coming summer. "Whatever it is, we are looking for a permanent fix," Polito said. The Erie County Health Department has said the elevated lead levels in the water at Emerson-Gridley do not pose an immediate threat to the health of children and adults. Two staff members at the building who were tested had no elevated lead levels in their blood, said Neal Brokman, the Erie School District's executive director operations. He said the staff members got tested on their own out of concerns for their health. Federal and state regulations require action to remediate a problem if lead levels in water are above 15 parts per billion, but the EPA lists no level at which lead in water represents an immediate threat...

HARRISBURG PATRIOT NEWS

Vultures Of Pennsylvania: Black vs. Turkey The presence of 2 distinct species of vultures – black and turkey – in Pennsylvania often comes as a surprise to casual nature observers. We may see them at roadkill along our roadways or soaring over our fields and forests in search of something dead to eat. But, we're likely to write them off as just another vulture or buzzard. But, just how different the 2 species really are might be even more of a shocker. Here's a look at the 2 species, their differences and some of their commonalities. Head color is the easiest way to tell the 2 species apart, if you're close enough and you're looking at adult birds. The head of the adult turkey vulture, as the name implies, is bright red, much like the face of a wild turkey. The head of an immature turkey vulture is ashy gray. The head of the

black vulture is black. Overall, the black vulture is all black, except for silvery patches on the underside of the wing tips. The turkey vulture is dark brown with more feather-edging of light brown; the underside of its flight feathers and tail are gray. Turkey vultures have wingspans up to 70 inches and bodies as long as 32 inches, while black vultures have shorter wingspans, up to 60 inches, and bodies as long as 26 inches. They weigh about the same...

WITF HARRISBURG'S NPR STATION

Watch now: Meltdown at Three Mile Island: 40 Years Later This month marks the 40th anniversary of the partial meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant. WITF is collaborating with PA Post and PennLive on a multimedia, month-long look at the accident, its impact and the future of TMI and the nuclear industry. That includes new documentary television and radio programs, long-form audio stories, photos, and digital videos. The work will include the voices of people affected as well as community events to engage with listeners, readers and viewers...

LANCASTER NEWSPAPERS

Manheim Central awarded \$1.4M state grant for energy-efficient high school renovation Manheim Central School District has been awarded a nearly \$1.4 million state grant for incorporating environment-friendly elements into its \$35 million high school renovation. The project, which was approved by the board in November 2018, includes rooftop solar panels, high-efficiency ventilation, dense roofing and wall insulation, and energy-efficient windows, water and lighting fixtures...

End is in sight for public water project in Intercourse years after water contamination discovery More than 16 years after a development in Leacock Township discovered high levels of a chemical in its well water, officials say the process to provide public water to 350 residents and surrounding businesses is approaching completion. The installation of piping to local homes and businesses in the Village of Intercourse is underway and expected to be completed in the spring of 2020, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. The first homes to use public water are expected to go online later this year. "There's a lot of things that we (at the department) get into when it comes to water, but concerns with respect to drinking water is acute," department Secretary Patrick McDonnell said Wednesday during a visit to the village. "We need clean water supply." The individual piping is part of the second and final phase of the public water project following a \$5.7 million first phase for the underground distribution system. The water project is estimated to have an overall cost of \$20 million, according to department spokesman John Repetz...

STATE COLLEGE CENTRE DAILY TIMES

Nittany Mall Will Host Wildlife Festival This Weekend In State College There's a pet store in the Nittany Mall, but this weekend, very different animals will come to the mall during the first Natural History Exhibition. The 12,000-square-foot exhibit will feature an eclectic mix — a sloth, skunk, armadillo, owls, alligator, falcon, hawk, snakes, bunnies and more. Hosted by Little Ray's Nature Centre, the Foundation for Animal Rescue & Education, Little Ray's Reptile Zoo and Centre and the Nittany Mall, the educational and interactive event will be open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

SUNBURY DAILY ITEM

Editorial: Require school water tests, publish results Current state law allowing school districts to avoid water testing by simply announcing in a public meeting that they do not plan to check school water for lead is unacceptable. With an opt-out clause such as this, Pennsylvania deserves the "F" grade it received from the PennEnvironment Research and Policy Center. "Most parents would be shocked to know that the majority of schools aren't compelled to test their drinking water for lead," said Stephanie Wein, Clean Water Advocate for PennEnvironment. "The acceptable levels of lead used is too high to protect health and the results of tests are rarely shared with the community." All Valley schools have already tested or are scheduled to test their water this year, school directors said this year. Any increased levels found have been dealt with swiftly. State lawmakers should swiftly adopt a new law that requires all schools to test drinking water for lead, publish the results and take immediate and specific corrective actions if the levels exceed recommended guidelines. "We don't appear to even be attempting to fix this problem," said state Rep. Karen Boback, R-Luzerne County, the author of a bill which would require testing. "Five years ago, a survey of federal data found Pennsylvania had the highest number of schools with elevated levels of lead in their drinking water." We should not even be debating this issue...

WILKES-BARRE CITIZENS VOICE

Lehman Twp Woman Organizing Effort To Challenge Luzerne Stormwater Fee LEHMAN TWP. — A Lehman Twp. resident is organizing an effort to hire an attorney to possibly challenge a stormwater fee that some Luzerne County residents are paying. Marian DeAngelis, 41, has contacted attorney Margaret M. Witherup with the Baltimore-based law firm Gordon Feinblatt LLC. Witherup has worked on stormwater issues in Maryland and plans to explore options for challenging the fee, she said. “I don’t think the (Environmental Protection Agency) requirements for addressing stormwater are going to go away, but I think there are lots of ways in which local jurisdictions can address the issue and they don’t always involve having to impose additional fees on citizens,” she said. In Maryland, for example, the state’s legislature passed a law in 2012 that required the 10 largest jurisdictions in the state to set fees to pay for work that would reduce pollution from runoff. But in 2015, the state’s legislature loosened the procedures stipulating how to pay for that work. Lawmakers threw out the requirement for a fee, although the pollution reduction standards remained in place. After that change, some local jurisdictions kept a fee, but others eliminated it. “They thought it could be addressed just by shifting money around within existing budgets,” Witherup said. “I think that’s something local jurisdictions can do. Once the state requirement is repealed, they had the flexibility to determine what was best for their own citizens.”...

PENNSYLVANIA CAPITAL-STAR

Self-described climate contrarian tells Pa. House committee global warming alarm is overblown Gregory Wrightstone’s testimony on what he called climate myths Wednesday ended up drawing a chuckle from a vampire, fairy, and other mythical creatures who gathered to protest a self-described climate contrarian’s take on the global warming. Wrightstone, a geologist and self-published author with ties to the natural gas industry, was invited to speak to the House Environmental Resources & Energy Committee by its chair Rep. Daryl Metcalfe, R-Butler. In an hour of testimony and questions, Wrightstone claimed that while human activity is heating the Earth, the potential consequences are not dire as the vast majority of governmental and scientific studies have concluded. Wrightstone cited increased plant growth and the benefits of a warm climate as opposed to past ice ages while making his case for carbon. “CO2 has increased. I will argue that’s a good thing,” Wrightstone said after the hearing. “Carbon dioxide increases have been benefitting Earth and humanity.” Besides increasing global temperatures, built up atmospheric carbon also leads to ocean acidification, which can disrupt ocean ecosystems and threaten people who rely on the sea for food. Currently, the Earth’s atmosphere is above 400 parts per million carbon. The previous high in recent geological history was 300 parts per million roughly 350,000 years ago, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association. While increased carbon is good for plant growth, a recent study found rice grown in a high carbon environment is less nutritious. Micheal Mann, a Penn State professor of atmospheric science, said in an email that Wrightstone’s acceptance of warming but attempt to portray it as a good thing is an example of a “kindler, gentler form of denial” of climate science. “The science of climate change impacts ... shows that climate change is having very detrimental impacts on us now, many of which are playing out in real time, and these impacts will become far worse,” he wrote...

These are the 10 most — and least — healthy counties in Pennsylvania | The Numbers Racket For this week’s edition of **The Numbers Racket**, we’re turning to a county-by-county listing of health rankings compiled by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The rankings of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties “provide a snapshot of a community’s health and a starting point for investigating and discussing ways to improve health. This guide will help you find and understand the data — in this site and beyond — as you begin to assess your needs and resources, and focus on what’s important,” the foundation’s website explains. As the foundation notes, “The rankings use more than 30 measures that help communities understand how healthy their residents are today (health outcomes) and what will impact their health in the future. Those health factors include health behaviors (30 percent), clinical care (20 percent), social and economic factors (40 percent) and a county’s physical environment (10 percent).” With that in mind, based on the foundation’s data, these are the 10 most — and least — healthy counties in Pennsylvania. The top three or four are a reminder that income tends to be destiny...

Poll: Pennsylvania voters strongly support nuclear energy as Legislature debates bailout Lawmakers may be skeptical about a plan to keep the state’s nuclear power plants afloat, but a new poll has found it has broad public support despite its anticipated cost to consumers. Eighteen percent of Pennsylvania voters strongly favor a proposal that would keep nuclear plants open by adding nuclear energy to the state’s clean energy law, a new Franklin & Marshall College poll found. Thirty-two percent somewhat favor the proposal. Thirty-seven percent of respondents oppose or strongly

oppose it, and 14 percent did not have an opinion. Pennsylvania currently gets more power from nuclear energy than from any other energy source, including natural gas, coal, or wind and solar power. But nuclear advocates say the industry's future in Pennsylvania is in peril if the state does not update its energy laws. Owners of two of the state's five nuclear power plants say they will close the facilities by 2021 if state lawmakers do not assist the industry, and the owners of the other plants say that more closures will follow. That would be unwelcome news to the 55 percent of poll respondents who say that nuclear energy should remain part of the state's long-term energy strategy. Thirty-two percent disagreed, and 14 percent did not have an opinion...

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WASHINGTON POST

The Technology 202 Blog: States seek to curb chaos unleashed by electric scooter boom Winter is over and temperatures are climbing, which means much of the country will flock outside in the coming weeks, resuming outdoor activities. For the fledgling electric scooter industry, which is just over a year old, that means ridership is expected to rise as well. But as its second season kicks into high gear, experts say, the multibillion-dollar industry — which has become one of the most talked about real-world technology experiments since the introduction of ride-hailing — is finding that the business landscape is rapidly shifting beneath its wheels. The lawless, Wild West-like environment that marked summer 2018 — a period when e-scooters appeared on city streets without warning, unleashing anger, vandalism and injury in overwhelmed cities — is largely a thing of the past. It's being replaced by a massive wave of emerging regulatory efforts at the state and local level that are attempting to rein in the irresponsible chaos unleashed in cities such as Los Angeles, San Diego, Austin, Nashville, Portland, Ore., Atlanta and the District. In congested urban environments, experts say, the rules will have to strike a delicate balance between imposing order and not stifling a micro-mobility movement that has been embraced by locals and alleviated gridlock. "Electric scooters are sort of a double-edged sword," said Gabe Klein, a transportation expert and former commissioner of the Chicago Department of Transportation. "On one hand, cities are very excited about small format, electric vehicles with zero emissions to cut down on people who may have taken a car before. On the other hand, they also crave order over chaos."...

The Energy 202: Democrats try to reset climate debate after Green New Deal defeat On the heels of the Green New Deal's defeat in the Senate, Democrats tried to prove they would not give up on tackling climate change — an issue that has energized their base and that they think is a political winner for them. Even though the nonbinding resolution to drastically curb climate-warming emissions over the next 10 years will not move forward, Democrats sought to put the onus back on Republicans. They renewed calls for the White House and Republican lawmakers to start taking seriously what they, and much of the scientific community, see as a crisis that could imperil future generations. Senate Democrats, most of whom voted "present" on the vote they decried as a "sham" forced by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), came back Wednesday to announce they would form a "Special Committee on the Climate Crisis" -- made up only of Democrats...

DELAWARE

DELAWARE CAPE GAZETTE

Wetlands protection easement funding requests due April 19 USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Delaware is now accepting applications from landowners interested in protecting Delaware's wetlands through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance through the Wetland Reserve Easement component of ACEP to restore, protect and enhance wetlands. Applications are accepted on a continuous basis, but the deadline to apply for fiscal year 2019 funding is Friday, April 19. WRE applicants must have farm records established with USDA's Farm Service Agency and the land should have been owned for two years. Properties eligible for WRE include farmed wetlands that can be successfully and economically restored; former or

degraded wetlands with a history of agricultural use; wetlands farmed under natural conditions; and “prior-converted” cropland converted on or before Dec. 23, 1985. Conservation Reserve Program land established with trees may also be eligible for enrollment through a waiver process. Landowners have two options under WRE. For permanent easements, NRCS pays 100 percent of the easement value for the purchase of the easement. NRCS also pays up to 100 percent of the restoration costs. For 30-year easements, NRCS pays the landowner 50 to 75 percent of the easement value for the purchase of the easement and 50 to 75 percent of the restoration costs. “Conserving wetlands has tremendous benefits in Delaware, including improvements to water quality as well as safeguarding wildlife habitat,” said Kasey Taylor, Delaware state conservationist. “I encourage our farmers to engage with their local conservationists to learn more as conserving wetlands may be closer to you and more beneficial than expected.”...

MIDDLETOWN TRANSCRIPT

Carper, senators demand information on EPA handling of ethylene oxide science review Sens. Tom Carper, D-Delaware; and Tammy Duckworth and Dick Durbin, D-Illinois, sent a letter March 27 to Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler seeking information related to the agency’s recent decision to question EPA career staff’s assessment of the health risks and political appointees’ handling of potentially illegal releases of ethylene oxide, a chemical identified by EPA as a carcinogen. In the letter, the senators request documents shedding light on the Donald Trump EPA’s enforcement efforts at the Sterigenics Illinois plant and its management of risks posed by EtO at facilities nationwide. The senators also requested documents related to EPA’s decision to request comments on and potentially re-assess EPA’s 2016 conclusion that the chemical is carcinogenic, a topic that is likely to be raised at today’s EPA public hearing. “Recent newspaper reports document the potential for higher cancer rates coincident with higher detected levels of EtO near the Sterigenics facility in Illinois,” the senators wrote. “These reports further express concern that EPA political officials may have directed EPA career staff to cease inspecting facilities using the chemical and refused to take immediate action. These news stories, and the resulting lack of public confidence in EPA’s enforcement efforts, led the governor of Illinois to direct the owner of the facility to cease using EtO last month. EPA concluded in 2016 that its ‘confidence in the hazard characterization of EtO as ‘carcinogenic to humans’ is high.’ EPA now appears to be entertaining the American Chemistry Council’s September 2018 request to reassess this conclusion, and the agency has formally requested public comment on whether EPA’s 2016 conclusion is accurate in a recent regulatory proceeding.” ...

DELAWARE STATE NEWS

Commentary: Three Mile Island 40 years later: Another turning power In the early morning hours of March 28, 1979, the Three Mile Island (TMI) nuclear power facility in Middletown, Pennsylvania went on alert as a result of a serious accident, one which was the result of both equipment malfunction and human error. The aftermath saw a near-meltdown of one of the facility’s working reactors and the loss of innocence about nuclear power’s risks. That event was a turning point for civilian nuclear power, just as the present period represents another crucial juncture. I was a senior at Susquehanna University (SU) in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania in spring 1979. Selinsgrove is about 50 miles from Middletown. When the TMI event occurred, I was with other SU students competing at a Model UN Security Council Conference at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. As the crisis unfolded, my friends and I split our time between the TV and the conference. We soon found out that within a few days of the TMI accident, most of SU students, faculty, and staff had evacuated the area. Though our team won the Best Delegation Award at Duquesne, our joy was muted by the eerie silence which greeted us upon return to SU. Though the external radiation which nearby residents were exposed to as a result of the accident was said to be akin to an X-ray, ignorance and fear took over. Both President Carter and Pennsylvania Gov. Richard Thornburgh visited the TMI site in a bid to calm residents and assess the situation. Ironically, a just-released Hollywood film, “The China Syndrome,” depicted a nuclear accident strangely similar to the sequence of events at TMI: a faulty valve indicated an overflow of water, so coolant valves were closed to prevent an overflow; when the valve was fixed, it showed dangerously low levels of water, such that the core of the reactor was briefly exposed. Unlike in the movie, however, a hydrogen bubble formed and threatened the entire facility for days before it dissipated...

WEST VIRGINIA

WEST VIRGINIA PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Justice Signs Coal, Campaign Finance Bills; Vetoes Cannabis Bill, 'Randy's Dream' Hours ahead of a midnight deadline to take action on bills from the regular legislative session, Gov. Jim Justice has announced a final set of approvals and vetoes. Of the 294 bills passed this regular session, Justice signed 266 pieces of legislation and vetoed 28. Justice signed three bills Wednesday at Harrison County Coal Company, a Murray Energy Company subsidiary based in Marion County. Miners joined Justice as he signed bills focused on the coal industry -- House Bill 3142 (reducing the severance tax on thermal or steam coal), House Bill 3144 (North Central Appalachian Coal Severance Tax Rebate Act) and Senate Bill 635 (relating generally to coal mining activities). With the Murray Energy mine focused on thermal coal, Justice spoke at length about House Bill 3142. He says the bill is aimed at saving thermal coal mining jobs across the state. It will reduce the tax rate from 5 percent to 3 percent over three years and translates to a \$60 million annual loss in revenue upon full implementation, according to a fiscal note from state revenue officials. "We can't do without these jobs -- there's no way around it," Justice said in an interview following the event. "The multiplier effect of a coal miner's job is astronomical. At the end of the day, we need to do everything in our power to preserve it. That's what I'm trying to do."

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MARC Train Service in W.Va. Chugs On, But an Uncertain Future Lies Ahead (March 26) The MARC Train, or Maryland Area Regional Commuter, serves about 250 West Virginians who live in Berkeley and Jefferson Counties. The train has been serving the area for more than 30 years, but Maryland has always paid the bills. West Virginia was only responsible for upkeep of its three West Virginia stations. Recently, that changed. For the last two years, Maryland has requested a little more than \$3 million in funding -- otherwise, they'd end the service into West Virginia...

WEST VIRGINIA METRO NEWS

Brown: Eastern Panhandle needs expanded infrastructure; MARC talks continue MARTINSBURG, W.Va. — A delegate believes Eastern Panhandle roads need work, but in ways not common elsewhere in West Virginia. Del. Sammi Brown (D-Jefferson, 65) spoke on MetroNews affiliate WEPM in Martinsburg Wednesday during Panhandle Live. Berkeley and Jefferson Counties continue to experience substantial residential and commercial growth. In a recent interview, Berkeley County Councilmember Dan Dulyea told WEPM the county records an average of 80 new addresses per week. Neighboring Jefferson County's housing construction continues to explode. A new development known as 'President's Point' in Ranson could consist of 1,100 homes when all phases are finished, according to plans posted by a developer. "I will never deny that there isn't still more room for us to grow," said Brown. "Especially because we've grown exponentially when other parts of the state are actually seeing loss. Our infrastructure is more about an expansion as opposed to a complete rebuilding. Whereas in other parts of the state, the roads are literally crumbling." As new industries continue to look at the Eastern Panhandle to grow, they look for other areas of infrastructure to fulfill their needs. Brown said she has been discussing ways to improve transportation in the Eastern Panhandle and fiber service throughout the Mountain State. "We're looking for a way to re-imagine mass transit. Another part of infrastructure, we need to remember this, is technology. So we're looking for a way to build digital infrastructure as well to really compete with what's going on as far as e-commerce."...

U.S. Forest Service begins prescribed burns ELKINS, W.Va. — The clear blue sky over the West Virginia mountains will be marked with rising smoke over the next few weeks. The first of several prescribed burns on the Monongahela National Forest got started this week in the Ramshorn section of the forest a few miles from Green Bank. "The main reasons are to improve wildlife habitat and enhance the forest structure, age diversity, and improve oak regeneration," said John Fry who coordinates the prescribed burns in the Monongahela National Forest. The idea admittedly seems counter intuitive, given the anti-forest fire message the U.S. Forest Service has delivered to Americans for almost three generations. Fry admitted, their efforts to prevent forest fires have negatively impacted the positive impact a low temperatures fire will have on the landscape. "There was an exclusion of fire back in the late 80's. They wanted every fire put out," Fry explained in a recent edition of West Virginia Outdoors. "We're reintroducing fire and we're getting a lot better results."

Justice signs bill lowering coal severance tax MANNINGTON, W.Va. — In front of West Virginia coal miners, Gov. Jim Justice signed a bill lowering severance taxes on thermal or steam coal in West Virginia from five percent to three percent. Justice had a signing ceremony Wednesday at the Harrison County Coal Company's Harrison County Mine in Mannington, signing into law House Bills 635, 3142, and 3144. "It's two total percent over three years, so the way that all shakes out, it probably is somewhere around .66 of one percent," Justice said following the ceremony. "If you look at where prices are today, it equates to about 40 cents a ton, so at the end of the day, in a lot of ways, it's semi-insignificant to everything except assuring that we're going to have these jobs." Critics of the cut disagreed. The change will amount to a \$60 million reduction of state revenue in the third year...

WV NEWS

Letter: Water Filling Stations make access to clean water easier for West Virginia's children April is Move More Month, and the American Heart Association encourages everyone to get more active! As partners with the association, we recommend children get about an hour of physical activity a day. This also means we want to make sure kids stay hydrated by drinking plenty of safe water every day. A key way to ensure all children drink more water is by installing water filling stations in their schools. The recommended amount of water a child should drink in a day ranges from seven to 10 cups, depending on their age and gender. But fewer than a third of children and teens drink enough water per day. That's concerning to organizations like the American Heart Association because water is critical to a child's heart and brain health. Studies have shown how filtered water filling stations, which have a water bottle filler along with a traditional bubbler, have increased the amount of water kids drink. One study found water consumption nearly tripled among students when a water dispenser was put near their cafeteria. We believe every child in West Virginia deserves free access to clean water, and water filling stations in their schools is an effective way to encourage kids to drink more water...

BLOOMBERG ENVIRONMENT (WV)

West Virginia Delays Updates to Water Standards West Virginia is delaying updates to dozens of its water quality standards after industry groups lobbied to put them off. Lawmakers rejected rules proposed by the state Department of Environmental Protection, calling instead for further study of the contaminants. Under legislation (S.B. 163) signed into law by Gov. Jim Justice (R) March 26, the state agency instead will collect more data and propose new standards for chemicals such as fluorine, heptachlor, ethylbenzene, toluene, and certain phthalates used to soften plastics. The agency will propose any standards by April 2020 for review during the 2021 legislative session. Environmental groups say lawmakers ignored necessary health protections, while industry representatives argued that the benefits from the resulting controls haven't been shown and requirements should be based on relevant science. The issue stems from rules proposed by the state Department of Environmental Protection in July 2018 following a regular review and update under the federal Clean Water Act. The review has to consider the most recent criteria from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Based on EPA's 2015 update, the state agency decided to revise water quality standards for 60 of the contaminants the federal agency had updated based on new health information....

West Virginia Slashes Coal Severance Tax Companies soon will pay less to mine coal in West Virginia. Gov. Jim Justice (R) signed into law a bill (H.B. 3142) that will cut the state's severance tax on coal used to generate power by 40 percent over the next two years. The measure, signed March 27, aims to prop up a struggling industry. Justice is a billionaire who owns coal mining operations in West Virginia, including Bluestone Industries. Severance taxes are imposed on the extraction of nonrenewable natural resources that are intended for consumption in other states. In addition to coal, they are levied on natural gas, timber, crude oil, and uranium...

MARYLAND

WBOC-TV SALISBURY/DELMARVA

Maryland Lawmakers Approve Oyster Restoration Bill ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP/WBOC) - The Maryland General Assembly has passed a bill to permanently protect five oyster sanctuaries in the law. The bill prohibits catching oysters in the five sanctuaries. They are Harris Creek, the Little Choptank River, the Tred Avon River, the St. Mary's River and the Manokin River. Supporters say the sanctuaries are critical to the recovery of the state's oyster population, which are the foundation of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Oysters are natural filters that improve water quality. They are estimated to be at about only 1 percent of their historic highs. Alison Prost, Maryland's executive director of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, says the bill provides needed permanent protection for the tributaries where large-scale restoration efforts are happening. Opponents of the bill argue it could adversely affect the seafood industry. In a statement to WBOC, Robert Newberry, Chairman of the Delmarva Fisheries Association, said: "HB298 as it's presented has a lot of issues that adversely impact the seafood industry in the state of Maryland. It is forming a segregation between two common industries, which are the wild fishery and aquaculture (private leasing of sanctuaries by oyster farmers). Arbitrary and comprecious because they are favoring one entity of the industry that shares a common resource, which is the oyster." The measure now goes to Gov. Larry Hogan. Some watermen say they're urging the governor to veto the bill.

CHESAPEAKE BAY JOURNAL

Blog: Bald eagles are nesting in Baltimore's restored Masonville Cove Who loves Baltimore these days? Bald eagles, that's who. A white-headed adult pair has set up housekeeping at Masonville Cove, a restored wetland and natural area on South Baltimore's otherwise industrial waterfront. Officials with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Maryland Environmental Service announced Tuesday that the distinctive looking raptors had been discovered nesting in a tree on the 52-acre property, which includes the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center. Eagles have been spotted at the cover off and on over the years, but these are the first known to nest there since at least 2007, when the Maryland Port Administration began cleaning up contamination and debris at the former dump and shipbreaking site on the Patapsco River. It opened to the public in 2012. Eagles can be skittish around people, so public access to the grounds will be limited during breeding season to a small area east of the education center. Restrictions will be eased gradually toward the end of breeding season, around mid-May, and access will be fully restored once any young eagles fledge, or mature enough to fly. That usually occurs by the end of May. During this time, events scheduled inside the education center will go on, but activities outside will be limited or suspended. The eagles' nest can be seen from the education center's balcony, though visitors are urged to bring binoculars for better viewing. Lots of other birds can also be seen at Masonville Cove. Birders have recorded sightings of nearly 250 species there since 2007, ranking it third best on the Baltimore ebird list of birdwatching hotspots in the metropolitan area...

VIRGINIA

NEWPORT NEWS DAILY PRESS

VIMS inventories every foot of the Chesapeake Bay coastline Maybe you want to find shoreline access in Hampton — boathouses, docks, public ramps. Maybe you're curious about development along Lynnhaven Inlet in Virginia Beach or a sea level rise scenario in Isle of Wight. Or maybe you're interested in tree fringes, beaches, bank height, tidal marshes, oyster reefs, mud flats or underwater grasses along more rural stretches of the Chesapeake Bay. Whatever floats your boat or piques your interest about the makeup of the Chesapeake coastline, the newest iteration of the official "coastal inventory" produced by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science can oblige you. The inventory features a host of interactive maps that drill down to every single foot of the bay's 62.7 million feet of shoreline in Virginia and Maryland. The goal, said Marcia Berman, program director of VIMS' Comprehensive Coastal Inventory, is to provide community representatives and resource managers as much accurate information as possible to make smart management decisions. "The coastline is changing all the time," said Berman. "The land use changes. Sea level, of course, is rising. This information is becoming more and more important for assessing resiliency for communities." The inventory began in a smaller way 47 years ago as a directive from the General Assembly for VIMS to map all tidal wetlands in the state. "What kind of plant communities there were, and where they were," said Carl Hershner, director of VIMS' Center for Coastal Resources Management. Then, in 1989, Berman said, researchers pivoted and expanded to a more comprehensive

approach to map shoreline position and conditions. That shift was partly in response to a controversy over whether to allow bulkheads at an oceanfront development in Sandbridge in Virginia Beach. “The General Assembly asked us what the policy should be,” said Hershner. “And our recommendation back to them was, ‘Well, if you’re going to set a policy for managing the shoreline, we had better know what the condition of all the shoreline was.’ ” ...

Experts say Chesapeake Bay water quality is the best since monitoring began Well over half of the Chesapeake Bay still is polluted, but experts say water quality has improved significantly — and, in fact, is now the best they’ve ever measured. New preliminary data from the Chesapeake Bay Program indicates that about 42 percent of the bay and its tidal tributaries met clean water standards from 2015 to 2017, while 58 percent failed to do so. Water quality in that period ranks as the highest achieved since monitoring began in 1985. “Improvements in water quality take time, but we are finally seeing a positive response to the many restoration efforts of our partners,” said Dinorah Dalmasy, co-chairwoman of the CBP Water Quality Goal Implementation Team. The new assessment is a 5 percent increase over the 40 percent attainment reached in 2014-2016. Experts credit the improvement to less algae growth and boosts in underwater grasses and in dissolved oxygen in the open waters of the bay. Algal blooms are fueled by too much nitrogen and phosphorus dumped into the watershed. When those blooms die, the decay process sucks up dissolved oxygen and creates “dead zones” lethal to marine life. Underwater grasses are crucial habitat for many bay species, but are threatened in part by pollutants and sediment eroding into the bay and its tributaries. Sediment can smother grass beds and cloud the water column, blocking sunlight from reaching underwater plants. A “pollution diet” that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency imposed on Virginia and other bay states in 2010 has helped curb nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment loads to the estuary. Those loads can vary widely from year to year depending on the amount of seasonal rainfall, extreme weather events and changes in land use throughout the 64,000-square-mile watershed. Experts say that from October 2016 to September 2017 about 240 million pounds of nitrogen, 12.7 million pounds of phosphorus and 4.3 billion pounds of sediment reached the bay...

SUFFOLK NEWS-HERALD

North Suffolk church goes solar After hearing a Sierra Club presentation about solar energy last October, Tom Endrusick was hooked, and it didn’t take long to hook his church, St. Andrew Presbyterian, into going solar. The presentation included a representative from Convert Solar, as well as Ruth Amundsen from Solar United Neighbors, who explained their role in installing more than 500 solar panels on the roof of Norfolk Academy. Endrusick, who is on the church’s property committee, said he has been trying to sell other churches across the region on the idea ever since. Over the past several days, Convert Solar, a company based out of Virginia Beach, has been installing solar panels on the roof of one of the church’s buildings. Workers completed the project Monday, and the church will use those solar panels to generate some, but not all, of its electricity. The panels will generate 33 kilowatts of electricity, Endrusick said. The church, through an agreement with Convert Solar, will pay nothing for the installation and upkeep of the solar panels for the next 10 years and pay just for the electricity generated through the solar panels at a rate of \$0.12 per kilowatt hour, Endrusick said. At the end of the 10 years, the church will buy back all of the solar panels for \$1. At that point, the church will have full ownership of the solar panels, which will generate free electricity for the church for at least the next 20 years...

MISCELLANEOUS

GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE

State Approves Law to Protect Feds in Future Shutdowns, and OPM Clarifies Leave Donations As Congress continues to consider an array of bills aimed at preventing future government shutdowns or providing aid to workers impacted by lapses in appropriations, Maryland officials have stepped into the breach with their own protections for federal workers. On Tuesday, Republican Gov. Larry Hogan signed the Federal Shutdown Paycheck Protection Act, which was passed out of the Maryland General Assembly earlier this month. According to Maryland Matters, the law sets up a new Federal Government Shutdown Employee Assistance Loan Fund, where the state would issue temporary financial assistance in

the form of no-interest loans to federal employees who are forced to work without pay during a lapse in appropriations. Additionally, a provision of the law paves the way for excepted federal workers to apply for unemployment benefits, provided that the Labor Department changes its guidance that currently bars such employees from the program. Furloughed employees already may apply for unemployment benefits in Maryland during the shutdown, but they must pay those benefits back if and when they receive retroactive pay...

BLOOMBERG ENVIRONMENT

EPA Defends Shifting Staff Between Chemical Risk Efforts The EPA attempted to justify its decision to shift chemical risk assessment staff toward a program that determines whether chemicals should be restricted, responding to concerns raised March 27 by a House subcommittee leadership. Under the Integrated Risk Information Program, also known as IRIS, the EPA studies the potential adverse health effects of human exposure to various chemicals and doses at which harm might occur. State and federal regulators combine the resulting health assessments with exposure information to set standards and regulations on air and water pollution, chemicals, and contaminated sites. The Government Accountability Office found 28 of the agency's 30 IRIS program staff were directed last October to work instead on the agency's evaluations for chemicals that may be regulated under the Toxic Substances Control Act, Alfredo Gomez, who directs the independent watchdog's environmental protection work, said at a House Science, Space and Technology Committee subcommittee hearing. Rep. Lizzie Fletcher (D-Texas), chair of the committee's environment subcommittee, asked the EPA to justify shifting those staff members. An EPA official emphasized that the IRIS staff did that work without being moved to another office, and that they did so in partnership with colleagues working on scientific issues. "We take a one EPA approach," Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta, principal deputy assistant administrator for science for the EPA's Office of Research and Development and the EPA's science adviser, said at the hearing...

Wheeler To Face Appropriators in First Hill Test as EPA Head EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler will face House appropriators April 2 to defend the Trump administration's fiscal 2020 budget request, which again seeks deep cuts to the agency's budget and staffing levels. Wheeler will appear before the House Appropriations subcommittee for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, the committee confirmed March 27. The hearing will be Wheeler's first Hill test since he was formally confirmed to the Environmental Protection Agency's top slot in February. Wheeler last testified before Congress in January, when he was acting agency head, during his confirmation hearing for the job. The Trump White House is proposing to slash the EPA's budget by around \$2 billion—including eliminating many voluntary climate programs and requesting large reductions in the EPA's grant programs that help state and local regulators implement federal environmental protections. The request is consistent with previous Trump administration proposals. Wheeler is likely to face scrutiny over those proposed cuts from appropriators on both sides of the aisle. Congress hasn't matched the Trump administration's requested steep cut to the EPA in prior years, even when both chambers were controlled by Republicans. It isn't clear whether Wheeler will publicly back all of the Trump administration's proposed cuts, but he recently defended the 2020 budget request's proposal to cut nearly 2,000 EPA jobs...

EPA Neglect Is Catalyst for Chemical Research, Firefighters Say The EPA's failures to recognize firefighters' exposures to chemicals is helping spur the International Association of Fire Fighters to sponsor its own research, a senior association official says. The association hopes some of the research results will be ready to present at the association's health and safety symposium in August, Patrick J. Morrison, assistant to the association's general president, told Bloomberg Environment March 27. The Environmental Protection Agency has failed to make public some chemical safety information, refused to gather additional information from chemical manufacturers, and ignored firefighters' exposures to chemicals such as asbestos and hexabromocyclododecane flame retardants that it's examining as it decides whether those chemicals' risks warrant regulatory controls, Morrison said. "We feel like the chemical companies are running EPA right now," he said. The EPA didn't comment on that particular statement, but pointed to information it has posted online that firefighters and other groups could examine to address their safety questions. "EPA needs to do its job and protect workers now," Rep. Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.) told Bloomberg Environment after a March 13 hearing of the House Energy and Commerce Committee's Environment and Climate Change Subcommittee. "We know as a matter of fact that firefighters, teachers, farm workers and people in many other professions are dying earlier and getting sick more than they should," due to their chemical exposures, Tonko, the subcommittee's chairman, said by email...

Army Corps Budget Will Exceed White House Request, Lawmaker Says There is nearly no chance that the White House's proposal to slash the annual budget of the Army Corps of Engineers by more than 30 percent will become a reality,

according to the chairwoman of the congressional subcommittee that handles Corps funding. Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio) told Bloomberg Environment she felt that the government spending proposal for the Corps was "a cheap shot" from a White House that was trying to craft a budget that appeared fiscally austere. "They know we'll try to rescue them," Kaptur said, adding that none of the Republicans on her House Appropriations subcommittee have asked her to stick with the White House's numbers. "I haven't heard that from a single member," she said. "All we're getting are requests from members on both sides of the aisle to meet the needs of their regions."...

GREENWIRE / E&E NEWS

Army waives fee of nearly \$300K for PFAS testing records The Army has waived a fee of nearly \$300,000 to complete an environmental group's Freedom of Information Act request for water testing records related to toxic nonstick chemicals known as PFAS. Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances are used in military firefighting foam and a wide range of other industrial and consumer products. Some of the roughly 5,000 chemicals in the PFAS family have been linked to health problems including liver disease and certain cancers. The Department of Defense has identified 401 installations where known or suspected PFAS releases have occurred. The Army and the rest of the military "must be part of the solution, not more of the problem," Environmental Working Group legislative attorney Melanie Benesh said in a statement. "Collecting as much of the data as possible about where and how much PFAS contamination threatens service members, their families and others who live and work near these facilities is paramount to this effort," she added. In a letter to EWG earlier this month, the Army had said there would be a fee of \$290,400 for the records on PFAS water tests at roughly 150 installations. In its FOIA request, EWG had asked that the fee be waived. EWG appealed the Army's initial decision not to waive the fee. The Marine Corps and two Navy offices have also granted fee waivers, EWG said. The Army did not provide any additional comment.

Air Pollution: Letter to EPA: Don't 'jeopardize' mercury control investments Power producers are effectively calling on EPA to scrap its current plans for revisiting its landmark 2012 regulations on power plant mercury emissions and instead focus on wrapping up a legally required review of those regulations while dealing with underlying cost-benefit issues in a separate rulemaking. "EPA should take no action that would jeopardize" the investments that utilities and other producers have already made in complying with what are formally known as the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS), according to an obliquely worded letter to agency air chief Bill Wehrum from the Edison Electric Institute, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and other trade groups and labor unions. Virtually all coal- and oil-fired plants are in compliance with the standards at a cost of billions of dollars. Many of them "are subject to ongoing rate reviews of recovery of costs by investor-owned companies," the letter says. "In the case of public power utilities and rural electric cooperatives (even those that are rate regulated by state commissions), compliance costs are directly borne by their customers."...

Air Pollution: EPA advisory panel enters 'uncharted territory' Under typical circumstances, a high-profile EPA advisory panel would end a public teleconference tomorrow by unanimously voting to send its assessment of a pivotal research roundup to agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler. Assuredly, however, the call among the seven members of the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) will not be typical. The committee's chairman, Denver consultant Tony Cox, is facing accusations of promoting a theory of scientific causation that would undercut EPA's ability to set air quality standards to protect public health (E&E News PM, March 21). While Cox says detractors are distorting his views, he and other CASAC members will face scalding criticism from former members and other scientists scheduled to address the committee. There are also signs of dissent within the panel, according to comments posted online by one current member, Dr. Mark Frampton, a retired professor of medicine from the University of Rochester. "Uncharted territory," George Allen, a past member who has been involved in four earlier reviews of the standards for ozone and other pollutants, said in an interview today. "We have never been here before."...

House GOP looks to tee up Green New Deal vote One day after the Senate rejected the Green New Deal, House Republicans announced they are launching a procedural push to put House Democrats on the record on the plan. Flanked by members of the newly re-minted House Energy Action Team, Rep. Jody Hice (R-Ga.) said he will introduce a discharge petition after the Easter recess to force a vote on the resolution. "The American people need to know where their representatives stand on this radical proposal, the Green New Deal," said Hice, who added that H.Res. 109 by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) "will dramatically take American society further to the left. And I want to vote on it."...

Reagan appointee says EPA 'disemboweling' program A federal investigator who spent a year auditing EPA's chemical testing program yesterday still couldn't explain how or why agency leaders decided against releasing a completed review of the dangers posed by the widely used chemical formaldehyde. "There are questions about what happened to it," Alfredo Gómez, director of the Government Accountability Office's natural resources and environment team, told lawmakers at a House Science, Space and Technology subcommittee hearing. Also unclear, the GAO witness said, is "when it is going to be released." While Republicans and a career EPA official supported leadership's efforts to delay the draft formaldehyde report, a Reagan-era political appointee argued they were destroying the agency's Integrated Risk Information System. IRIS has been working on the draft formaldehyde risk assessment since 1997. The chemical, which a Department of Health and Human Services program determined in 2011 is "known to be a human carcinogen," is used in everything from plywood to insecticides. IRIS was ready to unveil its long-awaited formaldehyde review last year. But EPA leaders blocked the science-focused program from releasing any of its research, GAO reported earlier this month. Such assessments are often used by regulatory offices at EPA and other federal and state agencies to limit the use of potentially dangerous chemicals...

EPA: For 3rd time, judge tosses suit over advisory panel makeup A federal judge today dismissed a third lawsuit challenging a far-reaching EPA restriction on advisory committee membership, likely dealing a fatal blow to opponents' hopes of overturning the policy anytime soon. In the ruling, U.S. District Judge F. Dennis Saylor said the Union of Concerned Scientists had failed to show that the 2017 directive by then-EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt violated the Administrative Procedure Act. Saylor, based in the District of Massachusetts, also said the Boston-based advocacy group had failed to state a legal claim for which relief could be granted. The group, often known by its acronym UCS, filed the suit in January 2018, three months after Pruitt had generally barred EPA grant recipients from serving on agency advisory committees. Federal judges in other states also recently threw out two challenges brought by a variety of other organizations. Taken together, the three rulings make it probable that the policy will survive through the end of President Trump's current term in January 2021...

THE INTERCEPT

New Jersey Is Making Companies Pay for Toxic Contamination -- Shining a New Light on a Little-Known Offender New Jersey laid financial responsibility for dealing with PFAS contamination squarely at the feet of the chemical companies responsible for it. The state's Department of Environmental Protection issued a directive on Monday ordering five companies to pay the costs of dealing with the toxic chemicals that have been associated with numerous health problems, including cancer. The companies include 3M, which created both PFOA and PFOS; DuPont, the chemical giant that used PFOA to make Teflon since the 1950s at the now massively contaminated plant Chambers Works; and DuPont's spinoff, Chemours. Monitoring, research, and cleanup of the chemicals, which the state has already begun, is likely to ultimately total "hundreds of millions of dollars," according to the order. The hefty price tag reflects the state's serious PFAS problem. New Jersey is thought to be one of the states most contaminated with these chemicals. Seventy percent of drinking water samples taken from 20 of New Jersey's 21 counties contained at least one compound from the class of chemicals, according to research done in 2009 and 2010. And, last year, another state study showed that all surface water samples taken from 11 waterways and ecosystems around New Jersey contained PFAS. All the fish found there contained the chemicals as well. The state is also home to military bases that have been contaminated by firefighting foam, as well as several industrially polluted sites...

NEW YORK TIMES

Climate Fwd.: One Thing You Can Do: Brew a Greener Cup of Coffee Exactly how humans came up with the idea of roasting and brewing coffee beans isn't clear. More certain is the fact that coffee has grown into a global industry worth billions of dollars. And with that popularity comes climate consequences. There's deforestation to grow more beans, the shipping emissions that come from moving them to market and the resources that go into packaging. So, with more than 80 percent of Americans regularly drinking a cup (or three), greening our collective coffee habit could have positive effects. That process starts at the source. Today, there are myriad labels, seals and certifications that promise you information on the human and environmental impact of your beans. An organic label, for instance, implies limits on the chemicals (like pesticides) used to grow the coffee, while a fair-trade seal should signal better treatment of workers and communities. Bob Schildgen, who writes the Mr. Green column for the Sierra Club, said the main labels he trusts for coffee are the United States Department of Agriculture organic certification and the Fairtrade seal. He said Smithsonian

Bird Friendly and Rainforest Alliance Certified also offer at least some assurances that the beans are produced with care. Once you've found beans with a lower environmental impact, what else you can do? Ditching single-serving pods is one step. Not only do they require more packaging, but single servings also take significantly more energy to brew than traditional drip methods...